



## The City of Austin Urban Forestry Board

February 15, 2012

The Honorable Mayor Lee Leffingwell and Austin City Council Members  
C/O the Austin City Clerk  
2006 East 4th Street  
Austin, Texas 78702

Mayor Leffingwell and Council Members:

For several years, the Urban Forestry Board has heard public comments from citizens concerned with the care of our public trees at City-owned cemeteries. We have communicated as a board with the Parks and Recreation Department several times in the last two years regarding these concerns, and beginning in 2012 we appointed a working group to review the management of trees at these cemeteries and report back to the Board their findings. I have attached this report for your review. In summary, **our concerns are the following:**

- Tree death in these public cemetery lands has been remarkable in recent years attributable to a lack of care including the lack of irrigation on stressed trees.
- Standing dead heritage trees are found in many cemeteries, including a substantial number in Oakwood Cemetery and Oakwood Annex Cemetery
- Tree care such as tree pruning has been included in the management contract, yet the maintenance contractor does not have qualified personnel (certified arborists) on staff

**The recommended actions for improved cemetery tree management include:**

1. That the contractor be required to irrigate highly stressed trees according to PARD staff recommendations in the cemeteries to reduce tree loss (especially Heritage Tree loss), and that this is documented and randomly inspected by PARD staff.
2. That a provision in the contractor's agreement be added that requires a certified arborist be on the staff, and that PARD be notified for approval before any pruning is performed.
3. That there is a better understanding of the contractor's responsibilities, documented in the contract, and that a provision for supervision and enforcement of the contractor's responsibilities is included in the cemetery management contract.
4. We recommend that the cemetery contract be rewritten to correct the tree care deficiencies, or to have the tree care tasks removed from the contract and let to city staff with appropriate funding.

Thank you for your attention to Austin's valuable tree resource, and particularly for your attention to the issues facing Austin's cemetery trees.

Sincerely,

Patrick Brewer  
Chair, Urban Forestry Board

CC: Sara Hensley, Director, Austin PARD